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SUBJECT: First U.S.-Saudi Joint Commission Meeting on Science and Technology Cooperation Meets in Riyadh

¶1. SUMMARY: Delegates from U.S. and Saudi technical agencies met in Riyadh May 11-12, 2009, to attend the first Joint Commission Meeting under the auspices of the United States-Saudi Arabia Agreement on Science and Technology Cooperation, signed in December, ¶2008. The primary result of this meeting was a roadmap for developing S&T-based capabilities in a broad range of disciplines. The two delegations also placed strong emphasis on stimulating innovative high technology and scientific entrepreneurship. One early outcome is that a follow-on conference and workshop on S&T cooperation focusing on entrepreneurship is tentatively planned for fall or early winter 2009 in Washington to be hosted by the National Academies. END SUMMARY.

¶2. A total of 14 representatives from State, USAID, USG technical agencies, Embassy Riyadh, and private sector entities comprised the U.S. delegation, headed by Bruce Howard, OES Bureau Director of Science and Technology Cooperation. Over 80 participants from comparable Saudi ministries and public and private organizations attended the event, headed by Prince Turki al-Saud, Vice President of the King Abdul-Aziz City for Science and Technology (KACST), the Saudi institution that combines the role of ministry and funding agency for scientific R&D.

¶3. The meeting's agenda focused on specific topical areas including: National Science, Technology, and Innovation Priorities; Needs and Opportunities for Business, Innovation, and Manufacturing; Health, Bioscience, and Biotechnology; Water, Agriculture, and Environment; Space, Aeronautics, and Remote Sensing; Oil, Gas, and Energy; Materials, Nanotechnology, and Petrochemicals; and Electronics and Information Technology.

¶4. The meeting was organized around plenary sessions for presentations from both delegations followed by in-depth exchanges in discussion groups for each of the topical areas. For these, the charge to the discussion groups was to assess current bilateral work, proposals for new or expanded collaboration, and identification of action agencies on each side. The meeting concluded with reports from each group summarizing its expectations for future cooperation. The meeting's Joint Statement, to be issued shortly following clearance by each side, will include these reports and overall plans for future collaboration across the range of S&T disciplines. This Joint Statement will be available to interested USG offices and agencies: POC: OES/STC Ken Ferguson, fergusonkp@state.gov, tel: 202-663-3233.

¶5. Saudi delegates and leadership expressed their satisfaction with the results of this JCM, coming so soon after the signing of the S&T Cooperation Agreement and ensuring in their view the continuing momentum of the Saudi-U.S. S&T partnership. While bilateral S&T activities have existed in a number of fields for years, they look forward to significant expansion of S&T cooperation soon.

¶6. Members of the U.S. delegation included:

- Bruce Howard, Department of State
- Ken Ferguson, Department of State
- Fernando Echavarria, Department of State
- Louise Mariegaard, Department of State
- Miriam Schwedt, U.S. Embassy, Riyadh
- Manu Bhalla, Regional Environment Office, U.S. Embassy Amman
- Eric Viala, USAID, Cairo
- Tom Jennings, Bureau of Reclamation, Department of Interior
- Dennis Woodward, US Geological Survey, Department of Interior
- Terrence Onsager, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

- Ibrahim Shaqir, Agricultural Research Service, USDA
- Charles Wessner, The National Academies
- Peter Hoffman, The Boeing Company
- Albert Jones, Civilian Research and Development Foundation

17. The text of a press release prepared at the conclusion of the meeting follows:

Press Statement for the U.S.-Saudi Arabia Joint Committee Meeting of the Science and Technology Agreement

Saudi Arabian and U.S. science and technology thought leaders met May 11-12 in Riyadh to discuss ongoing bilateral S&T cooperation and determine priorities and opportunities for the future. The meeting was the first to take place under the new U.S.-KSA Agreement on Science and Technology Cooperation signed in December 2008 by the King Abdul Aziz City of Science and Technology (KACST) and the U.S. Department of State. Participants identified priorities and opportunities in topical scientific areas including:

- Water, Environment and Agriculture
- Space, Remote Sensing and Aeronautics
- Entrepreneurship and Commercialization of Innovative Science and Technology
- Health
- Energy, Oil and Gas
- Materials and Nanotechnology
- Information Technology and Telecommunications

A U.S. delegation of 16 representatives from a variety of technical U.S. government agencies and business and approximately 80 representatives from technical agencies and businesses in the Kingdom attended the meeting. Co-chairs were Dr. Prince Turki al-Saud, Vice President of KACST, and Mr. Bruce Howard, Director of the Office of Science and Technology Cooperation in the U.S. Department of State.

The co-chairs outlined the national plans for investment in S&T research and development for both nations followed by detailed discussions of ongoing work in the seven topic areas. A special presentation on technological innovation and entrepreneurship was presented by U.S. expert Dr. Charles Wessner, Director of Innovation Policy at the National Academy of Sciences.

In each of the topic areas, participants heard presentations on existing programs and discussed future collaborations. The water, environment and agriculture group, for example, expressed strong interest in future opportunities include stimulating crop production, using agricultural practices and developing plant species that are conducive to water conservation and management, and resistance to soil salinity and drought. There are several areas of mutual research interest regarding livestock and crop diseases and other pests that impact food productivity. Representatives from KACST and the U.S. Department of Agriculture agreed to undertake further planning and design programs for their implementation in the near future.

The meeting concluded with a general agreement on next steps across the various areas of S&T cooperation. Some examples include:

- Representatives from the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) had successful discussions with Saudi counterparts on imminent plans for cooperation within their fields of interest.
- Dr. Charles Wessner, Director of Innovation Policy at the U.S. National Academies of Science agreed in principle with Dr. Prince Turki to convene workshops on innovation policy and S&T cooperation and commercialization in either the Kingdom or the United States.
- Along with government entities, private sector American corporations including Boeing Corp. , Aramco, and the Civilian Research and Development Foundation took part in the meeting and expressed interest in further discussions with KACST regarding alternative energy and developing S&T public-private partnerships.
- Other break-out groups identified potential partners for future collaboration.

End text of press release.

[18](#). This message has been cleared by Post and the delegation.

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